



STATE SENATOR

Gerald Van Woerkom

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Dear Friend:

With autumn fast approaching, I want to provide you with a legislative report on several issues that may be of interest to you. Please do not hesitate to contact me toll-free at 866-305-2134 or at sengvanwoerkom@senate.michigan.gov if you would like further information on any of the topics in this newsletter.

As you know, these are challenging times in our state, and I also want to assure you that my Senate Republican colleagues and I are working hard to reshape Michigan's economic climate. We are committed to restructuring the way government does business, so essential services are protected and the money taxpayers send to Lansing is spent wisely and efficiently. We are intent on enacting real and reasonable reforms to move Michigan toward economic recovery. I will keep you updated on our efforts.

It is an honor to serve you and residents of the 34th district in the Michigan Senate. I welcome your thoughts and concerns so I may better represent your needs. I look forward to hearing from you or seeing you in the district soon!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jerry Van Woerkom".

Gerald Van Woerkom
State Senator
34th District

***"We are intent on enacting
real and reasonable reforms
to move Michigan toward eco-
nomic recovery."***

— State Senator Gerald Van Woerkom



IMPROVING long-term care

Sometimes it's difficult to know where to go, who to ask, or what to say to find out about all the long-term care options available. A bill to help make the process easier became law at the beginning of the year. The new law establishes the framework for a Single Point of Entry system that gives people one place to go to get complete and unbiased information about their long-term care options. With this material, people can choose the most appropriate services to meet their needs.

Currently, four pilot programs are operating in the state. You can call 1-866-642-4582 to see if you live in a qualifying area. The Department of Community Health is overseeing and monitoring these sites and is required to report to the Legislature on their effectiveness. The new law is a big step toward making sure that Michigan seniors and persons with disabilities have the tools necessary to make informed choices about the long-term care support services available to them.

Van Woerkom backs consumer protection bills

Legislation to protect Michigan residents from the possible theft of their Social Security number has passed the Senate. The bills would allow a register of deeds to remove or obscure all or part of a Social Security number on documents such as real estate titles, recording of deeds, mortgages and instruments of record.

Currently, when someone requests a copy of a document such as a land title, it contains the Social Security number of the title holder. Identity theft is a major concern and there is no reason the numbers should remain on copies provided to the public.

I fully supported this legislation. The bills are the latest in a series of reforms championed by the Michigan Senate to fight identity theft. Yet, even with tough laws in place, it's important to take steps to protect your identity. Remember to destroy or shred anything with your Social Security number on it before you throw it away. And never provide your Social Security number over the Internet or telephone.



Early this year, State Senator Gerald Van Woerkom took his oath of office. Standing with Senator Van Woerkom is his wife, Valerie.

Senator Van Woerkom encourages senior visits

Meeting with people in the district is one of the best parts of my job as a state legislator. Since the first of the year, I have had the pleasure of talking with many seniors in the area. Please contact my office toll-free at 866-305-2134 if you would like me to speak at your senior center or senior event.

Van Woerkom supports MI HEART

Studies have shown that Michigan ranks as one of the unhealthiest states in the nation and that unhealthy behaviors account for up to 30 percent of our state's health care costs. On top of that, an estimated 1.1 million Michigan residents are uninsured. To help meet these challenges, Senate Republicans have developed a comprehensive reform package, called MI-HEART (Michigan Helping Ensure Affordable and Reliable Treatment). MI-HEART aims to provide affordable, basic health care coverage options, help people lead healthier lives, and contain the growth of health care costs.

Some of the major parts of the MI-HEART package include:

- A requirement to put in place healthy behavior incentives and provider pay-for-performance measures in the Medicaid program.
- Creation of the MI-HEART Exchange – a marketplace for the purchase of affordable, basic health care coverage, with a subsidized program for eligible, low-income individuals.
- The opportunity for parents with family coverage to continue that coverage for their children to age 26, even if that child is no longer considered a dependent.
- Creation of the Michigan Get Outdoors Fitness Award to encourage a healthy lifestyle.

Many seniors have shared with me their concerns about affordable health care - for themselves, their children and their grandchildren. I believe the MI HEART plan will help individuals and families better manage their health and health care costs.



Van Woerkom reminds seniors... summer tax deferment income threshold raised for 2007

Past Senate legislation signed into law raises the income threshold to defer the due date of summer property taxes up to \$40,000 this year. Eligible Michigan residents 62 years and older can defer the payment of their summer taxes until February 15 without penalty or interest. To do so, the property owner must file a deferment form with their city or township treasurer by September 15.

I've heard from a number of people that the summer property tax can impose financial hardship, especially for those on a fixed income. Many seniors use their state or federal income tax refund to pay the tax and find the deferment helpful. To obtain a deferment form, contact your local treasurer or go to www.michigan.gov/documents/homestead1_2541_7.pdf.

September 15



State Senator
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Compare and save on medications

A Senate bill helped jumpstart an expansion of a state website listing prices for the most commonly used prescription drugs in Michigan (www.michigandrugprices.com). People can now search and compare prices for up to 150 prescribed drugs – a fivefold increase from the 30 drugs previously listed. Senate Bill 525 would also require the site to include a drug's generic equivalent. Comparison shopping and generic drugs, if available and appropriate, can help lower the overall cost of medications.

More helpful information is available at www.michigan.gov/ag. Click on the Consumer Alert "Are You Paying Too Much For Your Prescription Drugs? Shop Around and Find Out!" for tips on how to find substantial savings by shopping around for prescription drugs.



Senator Van Woerkom Senior Hotlines

Here is a list of toll-free numbers to call (at no charge) for facts on a variety of subjects of interest to seniors and their families. Note: numbers are subject to change.

Alzheimer's Association	1-800-272-3900	Lawyer Referral.....	1-800-968-0738
American Cancer Society	1-800-227-2345	Legal Hotline for Seniors	1-800-347-5297
American Council of the Blind	1-800-424-8666	MDOT Pothole Hot Line	1-888-296-4546
American Diabetes Association	1-800-232-3472	Medicare Appeals (Hospital Discharge) ..	1-800-365-5899
American Parkinson's Disease Association	1-800-223-2732	Medicare Inquiry	1-800-633-4227
Arthritis Foundation	1-800-283-7800	Medicare/Medicaid Assist. Program	1-800-803-7174
Auto Repair Complaints	1-800-292-4204	Michigan Parkinson's Foundation	1-800-852-9781
Cancer Information Service	1-800-422-6237	Michigan Long Term Care Ombudsman Program	1-866-485-9393
Christopher Reeves Paralysis Foundation	1-800-225-0292	Patient Abuse & Healthcare Fraud.....	1-800-242-2873
Consumer Protection Agency	1-877-765-8388	Social Security	1-800-772-1213
Do Not Call List (Sign Up)	1-888-382-1222	Taxpayer Assistance (State)	1-800-827-4000
Elder Abuse Helpline	1-800-996-6228	Taxpayer Information (Federal)	1-800-829-1040
Energy Assistance	1-800-292-5650	Utilities (Public Service Commission) ...	1-800-292-9555
Hospice	1-800-331-1620	Veterans' Information & Assistance	1-800-827-1000
		Senator Gerald Van Woerkom.....	1-866-305-2134